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30B Fanshawe Road, Cambridge CB1 3QY, UK. E-mail: Richard.Patient@care4free.net.

Little Rush Warbler *Bradypterus baboecala*, new to Togo

Gavin Selfe

L'auteur rapporte la découverte de la Bouscarle caqueteuse *Bradypterus baboecala* c10 km au nord de Lomé, Togo, le 9 juin 2002. Ceci constitue la première mention pour le pays et également la plus occidentale en Afrique de l'Ouest, l'espèce n'ayant été observée auparavant que jusqu'à Onitsha, au Nigéria. L'oiseau a été vu et son chant entendu à plusieurs reprises, la dernière fois le 28 juillet.

On 9 June 2002, at c09.30 hrs, I observed a Little Rush Warbler *Bradypterus baboecala* in a large swamp c10 km north of Lomé, Togo (c06°13'N 01°16'E). The bird was uttering its characteristic song, consisting of an initially slow, then accelerating series of dry *truk... truk truk...* notes stopping abruptly, while displaying low above the vegetation with spread tail pointing down. I watched it for c30 minutes under good light conditions (sunny weather with some clouds), approaching it to c10 m, and obtained good views while it perched low on reed stems, noticing in particular its whitish underparts with streaked chest and strongly graduated, faintly and narrowly barred tail. The site consists of a large swampy area along the Zio River, just before it reaches Lake Togo. The swamp has some islands of slightly higher, solid ground with several large trees. During subsequent visits to the site, I heard the species several more times, the last during my final visit in the morning of 28 July 2002. I know the song well from southern Africa.

This appears to be the first record of Little Rush Warbler in Togo; it is not mentioned in the most recent checklist for the country². Although the species, which is also known under the alternative name of African Sedge Warbler, is widespread and locally common in eastern and southern Africa, it is a rare and local resident in western Africa, where it has only been recorded with certainty from scattered localities west to Onitsha in Nigeria^{1,3,4}. This record is therefore the westernmost to date, although there is a single, unconfirmed, claim of a singing bird from northern Côte d'Ivoire⁵. Little Rush Warbler may perhaps be more widespread than these scarce records suggest. Its secretive behaviour may cause it to be overlooked, although its distinctive, loud song, which is mainly uttered in the breeding season, during the rains, attracts attention⁴.

Acknowledgements

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118 Senior Drive, Northcliff, Johannesburg, 2195, South Africa.
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